

Screenland

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Hollywood
Screenwriters

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Author! Author!

By Joseph Ashurst Jackson

WHILE wandering around the Goldwyn studio not so long ago I gathered the impression that I was in a literary corral—a sort of round-up, as 'twere. Men and women who have made themselves famous by the judicious and meticulous use of their typewriters seemed as ubiquitous (I like that word; it has literary quality) as razors at a negro picnic.

These mighty wielders of words seemed entirely human and unpretentious—regular people. So I approached a group of them at lunch in the studio commissary, expecting to hear a brilliant discussion on the relation of motion picture scenarios to the Greek drama. My ears pricked up when they caught the word "punch," an expression frequently used to describe what a story lacks. Ah, I thought, here is conversation worthy of a young Boswell. On closer approach I heard Thompson Buchanan, author of "Civilian Clothes," tell J. G. Hawks that one M. Carpentier had greater punch than one M. Dempsey.

Mr. Hawks, as managing editor of the scenario department, is the boss of this distinguished crew. And speaking of matters pugilistic, he is himself, big enough and powerful enough to make a success by punching a prizefighter instead of a typewriter, but when you look at his kindly face and notice his quite, unassuming manner you forget all about controversy of any sort.

Clayton Hamilton, seated at the same table, was professor of the drama for many years at Columbia University and is the author of several books about the theatre. He had just received his census blank, which asked the question:

Mary Roberts Rinehart is an "Eminent Author—ess."



Rupert Hughes (right) and Rex Beach.

Above is Thomas Buchanan author of "Civilian Clothes."

"Can you write?" To which he replied: "Consult my publishers." I asked him if he would return to Columbia this year, and to that he replied that he needed a rest from teaching, and that he was sure his students did. Which isn't bad at all for a professor.

On going out on the lawn, I heard a noise like unto the rumble of a motor. Inquiry elicited the information that the strange sound emanated from the portable typewriter which Gertrude Atherton manipulates with

such skill and vigor. Cleves Kinkead, who moulded "Common Clay" into play form, remarked in Southern drawl that the machine seemed better suited to the writing of grand opera than the silent drama.

Mrs. Atherton is a hard worker. She keeps regular office hours and pounds her typewriter most industriously until five o'clock, when she "knocks off" and serves tea in her office to some of her distinguished co-workers.

One of the regular attendants at these informal parties is Gouverneur Morris, author of "The Penalty," "The Water Lily" and numerous other photoplays and printed stories. Although most of Mr. Morris' stories deal with tremendous action and virile theme, he is himself extremely shy and unassuming. (He reminds one of Robert Louis Stevenson in this respect.) But under the influence of Mrs. Atherton's tea and her faculty for making her guests feel at ease, he loses his shyness.

Another eminent at the tea-party was Rupert Hughes, who was collaborating in the production of his story, "Canavan," called in the film version "Hold Your Horses," and starring Tom Moore. Mr. Hughes was also writing "Mr. and Miserable Jones," an original story for the screen. He is an easy man to interview. He has ideas on every phase of the writing business and expresses himself fluently and picturesquely. He carried a stick — a custom quite common in New York, but rare in Calfilmiland.

Charles Kenyon, who acquired a reputation when he



wrote "Kindling" and whose original story, "The Alibi," will be produced by Goldwyn, is the most dapper of the lot. He wears his clothes better than most leading men and carries himself with a smart swagger.

The youngest of the lot is Elmer L. Rice, author of "On Trial," a sensational stage success. He is only 28 years old now and hardly looks that. He has wavy red locks and wears shell glasses. There ought to be a gag in that about the tortoise and the hare. He was then adapting Maurice Maeterlinck's story, "The Power of Good," to the screen.

I did not meet Rex Beach, the President of the Eminent Authors, but I did hear a good story about him. An "extra" girl in one of the pictures said she had always thought Rex Beach was a summer resort, now she learns that he is a writer.

Nor did I meet Mary Roberts Rinehart, Basil King or LeRoy Scott, who also contribute to the Eminent Authors Productions. They were not at the studio that day. The company is probably afraid it will be accused of being a literary trust if all of them are found there together at the same time.

Gertrude Atherton (above). Gouverneur Morris in action (below).